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ABSTRACT

Research has confirmed that what parents view as being important for their children to learn and how they believe their children are able to learn are reflected in both the learning opportunities parents provide in the home and the teaching strategies they use with their children. Tape recordings of children and their parents during planned reading and writing events in the home showed that during the writing tasks, parents' language tended to be very directive. Some parents made the decisions about what the child should write. Some told their children where to place the letters or how to make them. For the most part, parents initiated the task with questions or made requests for specific information. Their responses were more often than not correcting ones. During the reading events, half of the parents did not read the title of the book. Most of the parents pointed to the illustrations as they read, but did not stop to talk about them. Parents read the text just as it was written. They tended to use the "what's that" kind of questions and they did not wait for cooperative reading that might have occurred in the repeated phrases in the books. The tapes showed an interesting phenomenon: without exception, all of the parents were far more comfortable with and supportive of the child's self-help model of writing than they were of that model of reading. (HOD)

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PARENT'S TEACHING STRATEGIES WITH CHILDREN LEARNING TO READ AND WRITE: BEFORE AND AFTER CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

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Research has confirmed that what parents view as being important for their children to learn and how they believe their children are able to learn are reflected in both the learning opportunities parents provide in the home and the teaching strategies they use with their children. In this educational agenda, there is an exchange of meanings between parent and child -- a meaning exchange founded in language which describes, explains, elaborates, predicts, confirms, accepts and supports; or, contradicts, corrects, pressures, rejects, and sometimes, even ignores. In other words, what is said, and how it is said; what is heard, how it is interpreted, and, therefore, what response is given are all in the teaching-learning transactions between parent and child.

We are finding, as we continue to study the research tapes of children and their parents during planned reading and writing events in the home, that the characteristics of the languaging in these transactions suggest what parents believe reading and

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writing to be as well as indicate to the child what his or her role is in the teaching-learning setting. We are able to code specific kinds of questioning, stating and responding language that parents use with their children. We can hear the "what's that" questions, the request for information, the invitational questions that encourage prediction and elaboration; as well as the comments that direct or lead to "I know you are able and I value your interpretation and efforts." You can see, from the following categories of language use in the teaching strategies of the parents, that just as the parent-initiated questions and statements are either negative or positive, so are the responses to children's comments, questions, and self-initiated efforts.

Questioning, Stating, Responding Strategies

Parent-initiated Questions

- Interrogation questions: expect or demand "right answer" response
- Request questions: used for clarification, confirmation, information
- Invitation questions: promote elaboration, prediction

Parent-initiated Comments

- Insistance comments: repetitive directions, demanding, "nagging"
- Direction comments: tells what or how
- Information comments: provide explanation, clarification, relevant cues
- Supportive comments: relate known experiences for child's understanding
- Invitation comments: encourage prediction, elaboration

Parent Responses

- Ignores
- Corrects/rejects interpretations or predictions
- Provides additional cues/information
- Promotes further elaboration

Confirms predictions/interpretations
Promotes further prediction
Values questions/comments -- suggests or offers praise that is meaningful
Takes control
Recognizes importance of wait-time

We believe these teaching strategies -- all language-based -- may well determine the child's initial learning-to-read-and-to-write strategies that he or she brings into the classroom. Let me share with you what the tapes told us in the first early fall taping of parents and children.

During the writing tasks, parents' language tended to be very directive. Some parents made the decisions about what the child would write. Some told their children where to place the letters or how to make them. They usually spelled words for the children or had them "sound out" the word in order to spell it. Some parents provided relevant clues; others gave very irrelevant and confusing clues. For the most part, parents initiated the task with questions that were those of interrogation or made requests for specific information; or, they initiated comments that gave directions and information. Their responses were more often than not correcting ones. Let's look at four examples of well-intentioned parents who took very seriously their role as teacher of their child in this writing event.

(reproduction #1)

Kristy's mother spelled each word for her child. When she came to the letter "v" in love, she provided this information: "It's an upside "A" without a line in it." Her clue for spelling "you" was: "You start with a "y" like in Kristy." When she asked:

"Is there anything else you want to write?", Kristy told her: "I'm happy all the time when I'm at school." Her mother's response was: "That's too long. Just write, 'I'm happy.'" And, in spelling "happy," mother's information was" "It's a line with a loop, and you need two of them -- it's like an "R" without the line."

Kristy's letter looks like a letter; the words are spelled correctly -- even though the directions necessitated a lot of visual memory manipulations for the child -- but the edited message suggested either a perceived need for the little girl to write a short note or perhaps the mother thought there was a lack of time or that this was all her daughter could write. Kristy's comment indicated her disappointment: "I wanted to write more."

Rose-Ellen decided to tell her teacher that she had been on television. Her mother erased word placements that the child started and corrected spellings. She wanted her daughter to do well -- and well meant "correct", according to the mother's standards. The following excerpt from a typescript of the tape shows the dialogue between the parent and child when Rosa-Ellen tried to "do it her way."

Parent: Sign your name. Done.
Child: No, wait.
Parent: Sign your name.
Child: I can sign my name in cursive.
Parent: No, you're not writing your name in cursive.
Child: Oh, I'll mess it up?
Parent: That's right. Write -- print your name, not cursive your name.
Child: I write it in cursive.
Parent: I don't want you to write your name in cursive.
Child: OK. I'll make it over, I guess.

Parent: Right.

Dick's father, however, gave good clues and suggestions in his comments and responses to Dick's letter about reading Boom-de-Boom (Edelman) on television. "Remember who was the main person in the book?" The youngster replied: "The fat lady who loved to dance." The father then suggested: "Why don't you get on the first page and see if you can find out how to write about the fat lady?" This is Dick's letter; and, as he read it back, his father put his arm around him and said: "Very good!"

(reproduction #2)

Rusty's father was also a supportive teacher, but gave rather perplexing clues to his son's questions. "How do you spell cat?" Rusty asked; to which his father responded: "Sound it out -- you know how to spell dog." The father's explanation for how to spell "Mrs." was: "You see, they used to write M-r-s when they're married, and M-i-s-s when they're not married and when they're either one and they want to be their own boss, they write M-s." Rusty's response was: "Wow!" At the close of Rusty's writing, he said to his father: "I'm not too good daddy." But got in reply this assurance: "Yeah, you are. Someday you're going to be drawing them blue prints that I build a house with." Here's Rusty's letter to his teacher.

(reproduction #3)

In the second home taping, the influence of the whole language classroom teacher was evident in the children's taking more control of authorship of their own text. Also, the influence of our research project teacher (whose model of written language was the same as the classroom teacher's) was evident in the language of the

parents with their children. Let me share two more examples with you.

This time, Rosa-Ellen's mother watched as the child began her letter to Jerry Harste, co-author of the book that had just been read (It Didn't Frighten Me). After the greeting and the first sentence, she said: "Did you like the animals. You can tell him that if you want." A very different teaching strategy exemplified this time. When an older sister came into the room and read "anamos," the mother's remark was: "That's alright. It's the developmental stage she's in."

(reproduction #4)

Remember Kristy's edited letter? Let's look at this second one and consider exerpts from the dialogue between the child and parent during the writing event.

(reproduction #5)

Kristy began with the picture at the top of the letter; then wrote "I love you." When her mother asked to whom she was writing, Kristy put the teacher's name at the bottom with her name below: "She has to know who it came from." As she reread what she had already written, she said: "I forgot the 'dear'," -- placed that at the top of the page and asked her mom: "Will she be able to know that says, 'Dear Ms. Dok?'" "Yes, she'll be able to know that," was the mother's assurance.

Kristy then wrote the next sentence; stopped to think; and mother's question as to whether she wanted to write anything else was answered with: "I like Scholastic News." The parent smiled and said, "Alright." As Kristy began "s-k -- is that right?," her mother said,"That's the sound." "Am I spelling it right?" asked

the youngster. "She'll be able to read it." Kristy then said: "Sklasdic" as she wrote to which the mother sounded out the syllable "tic: scholastic." Again, Kristy made the sound of "news", drawing out the "oo" sound; and her mother said: "Well, it does sound like it would be "oo", but it's really spelled "n-e-w-s." As the child wrote the word, she remarked: "They should have made it a "z". Mother confirmed what made sense to Kristy: "Yes, they should have."

I want to talk with you about the reading strategies of some of the parents now. We had expected that in the first fall tapings, the parents might not see their children as readers yet, but that they would encourage cooperative reading -- or, make the book and story an exciting one. In studying the tapes, we looked at the parent-child language interaction in each of the components of the reading event.

Components to the Reading Task

Setting the stage: Introduction to the reading event

Using the book's illustrations to supplement and extend the text

Exchanging meaning between the author, child and parent in the written text

Concluding the story and shared reading event

Tenor evidenced in the relationship between parent and child

Teaching strategies of the parent when child read

One mother began: "Alright, let's look at millions of cats. See the cats?" and proceded to read the entire book in an unbelievable short time, stopping only once to point to one of the many pictures of all those cats! Another parent introduced the book this way: "Must be about a parade or something. See all the people marching in the parade? Ok. The name of the

book is Boom-de-Boom." (by E. Eldeman)

We were surprised to find that half of the parents did not read the title of the book, but moved right into the story. Most of the parents pointed to the illustrations as they read, but did not stop to talk about them. Three of the parents used the pictures to confirm the text in these ways: "See, down through here? Each day, see how it's getting bigger and prettier? See the difference between this one and that?" Here is another example of matching the pictures to the text content. "Oh, my goodness, but that's a lot of cat food, isn't it? Gosh, he's got about ten in his arms. Boy, that's one big cat fight!" However, there was not enough wait-time for children to add to the discussion of either the pictures or the written text.

We saw few examples of text elaboration or prediction of what was going to happen next or that "capturing of the author's intent" that encourages discussion. Parents read the text just as it was written. They tended to use the "what's that" kind of questions. They did not wait for cooperative reading that might have occured in the repeated phrases in either of the books: i.e., "Hundreds of cats, thousands of cats, millions and billions and trillions of cats." (Wanda Gag's Millions of Cats)

The end of the story came quite abruptly in almost every instance without any invitation to talk about, retell or reread on the child's part. Dick's father was an exception to this. Dick started to reread the book on his own, reading from the pictures and using memory reading strategies. The father assisted by pointing to the pictures, giving appropriate clues for what happened next, and accepted Dick's interpretation and

choices of words.

Parents were the readers. Children were the listeners. And when the parent did include the child in the reading process, it was to read a "known" word or an "expected" word. Only one parent used the shared reading event to "teach" reading. The following typescript will exemplify this.

Parent	Child
What's that word?	
	Kitten.
No, That's not a kitten. Cats. Look at all them cats.	
(reads text: Cats and Kittens everywhere. Hundreds of	
	Kittens
No. Cats. That's how you spell kittens. K..Thousands of	
	Kittens
Does that look like a 'k'?	
	No.
What's that word?	
	Cats.
OK. You quit making your own words. Millions and billions and trillions of	
	Cats. That one I got right!
(Said to the researcher: "And this is how I read with her.")	

In the second tapings, there was much more discussion about the book to begin with -- predicting what it might be about; looking at the pictures; talking about the pictures; and then elaborating on the text content. But the interesting thing is that most of this was initiated by the children! Once again, we saw the influence of the classroom teacher and our research teacher. We also were able to study the particular teaching strategies parents used to assist the children as they began to read more independently. We

considered the following strategies:

1. Has child read only "known" words
2. Supplies word for child
3. Has child "sound-out", spell, "repeat-after-me"
4. Corrects miscues of the child's
5. Provides appropraite cues/suggestions
6. Encourages risk-taking
7. Confirms and accepts
8. Responds to child's interpretation of text (role of active listener)
9. Gives appropriate praise for child's self-initiated efforts

We were aware of an emphasis on "sounding out" the word; and more correcting of children's miscues (substitutions for words, but with similar meaning intent) than was necessary for readers reading unfamiliar print. We were also aware that parents provided limited wait-time for children to use their own strategies; therefore, words were supplied before children could use picture or content clues to figure them out.

We did find, however, that those parents who had been categorized as using a nonfacilitating teaching model moved into the traditional teaching model found in many classrooms. And three of the parents moved into what we label as child-initiated, self-help/parent support model where they accepted and supported the child's natural reading strategies.

As we continue to study our tapes, we are recognizing an interesting phenomena: without exception, all of these parents were far more comfortable with and supportive of the child's self-help model of writing than they were of that model of reading. We don't have a clear understanding of why this phenomena exists. It may be that because children brought home their self-authored

and invented spelling texts, parents could see a developmental process taking place and recognized and accepted learning to write more like they accepted the child's learning to talk in uniquely self-authored and nonconventional beginning language. Children were learning to write, but reading is to be taught. And, we teach as we've been taught.

We do have data that support our original contention that the kinds of questions and statements parents make in the dialoguing with their children during a shared reading/writing event lead to dependent or independent, risktaking or nonrisktaking behaviors on the part of the child. Just as we, as teachers, are appreciating children's learning to read and write naturally, so can parents come to understand and support the knowledge that visual language learning is as natural as oral language learning. The more children use visual language -- in other words, the more they read and write -- the closer they approximate standard orthography and meaningful comprehension reading. We must also, as teachers, assume the responsibility for sharing with parents what research is demonstrating children can do with visual language -- when the learning environment promotes and permits use of their own learning-to-read-and-write strategies.

Hi

I LOVE YOU.

I AM HAPPY))

kristy.

Dick Wayne
TV Boom
D-Eboom
Get Up & He
FATIA DJ
Love
Dickwayne

#2

To MS
And
15
16
#3

Dear Mr. Harste

I like The Book

I like The anamos

Love Rosa - Ellen

Gibbs

I LOVE You DEA
I LiK SCHOOL NMtoc th
I LiK SK LaSTiK
NEWS

MS. DOK
KRISTY

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